(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the progress made in this regard, and the time by which it is likely to be completed; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) A By-pass already exists.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Meeting with U.S. Diplomats

225. SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN :
SHRI PARASRAM BHARDWAJ :
SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had recently asked an official of US embassy to leave the country within twenty four hours for indulging in spying activities;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any Indian official was involved in the said affairs;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Ministry has lodged any protest with the U.S. authorities in this regard; and

(f) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) and (b) Following reports of unauthorized contacts between a senior Home Ministry official and some diplomats based in the US Embassy in New Delhi, Government asked for the withdrawal of the concerned US officials. The US Embassy has informed us that this has been complied with.

(c) and (d) The matter involved allegations against a senior official. The official involved has taken voluntary retirement from Government service.

(e) and (f) The seriousness with which Government of India view the matter has been conveyed to the US authorities. Government decision asking for withdrawal of the concerned US officials reflects the same seriousness.

[Translation]

Escorts Heart Institute

226. SHRI JAGATVIR SINGH DRONA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre, New Delhi is in the list of referral hospitals for the treatment of civilian defence employees;

(b) if so, whether the Government reimburse the full amount of expenditure to the defence employees charged by the said Institute;

(c) if not, the amount of expenditure borne by the Government;

(d) whether the gratuity payment of an employee working in Defence Institute, Kanpur has been withheld as the full expenditure incurred against his treatment in the said Institute has not been given by the Government;

(e) whether a large number of defence employees are deprived from undergoing treatment in the said Institute as they are unable to meet the expenditure of the Institute; and

(f) if so, the number of deprived employees died so far ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The rates fixed under the package deal by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are reimbursed to the Central Government employees including defence civilians. The amount, if any, charged by the hospital in excess of the rates prescribed under the package deal, is to be borne by the employees concerned.

(d) No such institute exists under the Ministry of Defence. However, gratuity payment of an employee working in Small Arms Factory, Kanpur has been with held for adjustment of medical advance which was in excess of package deal amount.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Question does not arise in view of the reply to (e) above.

[English]

Recycled Syringe Racket Thriving

227. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI :
SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL :

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Recycled syringe racket thriving" appearing in 'The Hindustan Times' dated December 26, 1996;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It has been reported by the Government of NCT of Delhi that the contents of the news item were not found to be based on facts.

(c) and (d) Guidelines on control of Hospital acquired infection circulated to all States/Union Territories, inter-alia, indicate procedure for the disposal of single use needles and single use syringes so as to avoid their recycling. The syringes are destroyed after use by process of incineration. Steps have already been taken by Central Government hospitals to procure needle shedder and syringe shedder so that these could be destroyed effectively and not used again. In order to strengthen Hospital Infection Control, 20 States/Union Territories have been authorised by NACU to purchase one incinerator with a burning capacity of 90 kg. waste per hour.

Release of Indian Fishermen by Pakistan

228. SHRI P.S. GADHAVI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had taken up the issue of release of 225 fishermen with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan who had visited India recently;

(b) if so, whether any arrangement for their release was finalised at the ministerial level talks;

(c) whether Pakistani authorities have now asked for release of their fishermen including those spies who were caught while spying in India; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (d) Foreign Minister of Pakistan visited Delhi to participate in the SAARC Ministerial Meeting and paid a courtesy call on the Minister of External Affairs on 18th December, 1996. During the meeting, the issue of the release/repatriation of fishermen in each other's custody was discussed and it was decided that data should be exchanged by both sides and the concerned officials would meet as soon as possible to address this issue. The relevant data is being compiled.

Hospital Services and Reimbursement of Medical Expenses

229. SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI :
SHRI JAI PRAKASH (HARDOI) :
SHRI I.D. SWAMI :

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Supreme Court has given a verdict in the case filed by Punjab Government against the decision of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in the matter of hospital expenses recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Court has also ruled for greater allocation of funds to the State Governments for general patients and desired that due attention needs to be given for proper maintenance and treatment in the Government hospitals;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(e) the action the Government propose to take in the matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) and (b) The Hon'ble Supreme Court have held that High Court was right in giving the direction for reimbursement of money spent by respondents towards room rent for their stay while undergoing treatment in All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Escort Heart Institute respectively, New Delhi.

(c) and (d) Hon'ble Supreme Court have appreciated the stand of the State Government Counsel that greater allocation required to be made to the general patients but have stated that due attention for proper maintenance and treatment in Government hospitals is not being given and mismanagement is not being prevented.

(e) The State Government is competent to take decision for the maintenance of Hospitals depending upon the availability of the resources. The Supreme Court has given directions to the State Government and not to the Central Government.

Utilisation of Funds Collected as Tolls

230. SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether tolls are being levied on national highways or bridges thereon;

(b) if so, the amount if any, so collected;

(c) whether amounts raised thereby are to be used for development of roads;

(d) if so, whether any such amount has been so utilised;

(e) if not, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether such funds are to become part of Consolidated Fund of India, if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether Government plans to construct roads in 'BOLT' (Build Operate Lease Scheme);

(h) if so, whether any such road has been built or proposed to be built; and

(i) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (f) No Tolls are levied on